

## Homily, 30 August 2015

### Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8; Psalms 15:2-3,3-4,4-5; James 2:17-18,21b-22,27; Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23*



Hearing the bedroom door open down the hall, Joan looked up from her reading, set down her coffee and watched her niece shuffle into the kitchen. She looked awful. “Morning Meg,” she said. “You all right ... need a bucket?”

Meg muttered, “I feel like ...” She paused for a moment. “I feel lousy,” she finally said as she sat down at the table. Then put her head down and moaned quietly.

Joan looked at her for a moment, picked up her coffee and listened quietly to her niece. “Meg,” she finally said, “Get a drink of water. Take something for your headache, and go back to bed.”



Meg had graduated from the state university and went on to become a physician’s assistant. Then she went off to Cambodia for a couple of years as a Peace Corp volunteer. Now she was back and was just spending the summer with her aunt before moving on with life. Last night she had gone out with some old college friends and they had celebrated just a little too much.



Later that afternoon, Meg walked into the living room and sat on the couch. She looked much better.

They sat quietly for a while. Meg finally broke the silence. “Thanks aunt Joan.”

“Don’t mention it,” said her Aunt. “Just remember you’re not a college girl any more.” They sat quietly for a few moments. Then Joan asked, “Do you have plans for tonight?”

“No,” said Meg, “I wouldn’t mind just having a quiet evening.”

“Well, you can come to five o’clock mass with me if you like,” suggested her aunt.

“Oh aunt Joan, ... I haven’t been to church in years,” Meg said.

“Ahh,” said her aunt, “... why not?”

Joan didn’t say anything more, she just looked at her niece, waiting for her to go on.

“I guess ...” Meg continued after a while, “ I guess I decided that it was more important that I went out and helped others.”

“Do you think God cares that much about my personal life: whether I go mass, if I go out and party too hard on a Friday night, whether I sleep with someone or not ... not that I’m seeing anyone right now ... but you know what I mean.”

“There are so many things wrong with the world,” she went on, “war, terrorism, crime, human trafficking, government corruption, greed – those are the evils that God wants us to confront ... and he wants us to care for the people that are hurt by them.”

Joan was quiet for a moment. Then she picked up the little book she had been reading, found the page she wanted and read:

*“From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”*

“It’s hard to imagine that all the evils you recited are coming from people with good hearts. It’s naive to think that what happens in someone’s heart isn’t related to the bigger problems of the world. So, yes, I do think God cares very much about your personal life.”

“Meg, I am very proud of how you serve others; that you care deeply about the social problems in our world. And that’s something Jesus encouraged us to do both by his teaching and by his example. You’ve done that very well.”

But Jesus also cared for each and every person, including his followers, the ones he sent out to minister to the poor and the sick.”

“In addition to sending them out to preach and help others, he taught them to pray; he corrected them when they were bitter or angry and when they sought power and honor.”

“Those men he trained as his apostles, they lived their lives for others and they were men of prayer who worshipped together. They also held themselves to pretty challenging moral standards.

All the men and women who followed Jesus understood that the call to discipleship was a way of life ...”

Joan paused for a moment and looked at Meg. She was listening, thinking about it, so Joan went on ...”

“The first Christians were famous for taking care of one another and looking after the poor and the outcasts. Strangers were welcomed into their communities. Everyone was respected for their dignity as brothers and sisters in Christ; men, women, elders, orphans, widows. ”

They did it because they loved God; they loved Jesus. And they knew he loved them and gave them hope. To them that meant they had to be pure in heart. Everything flowed from that, from giving their hearts to Christ.”

“There is wisdom in embracing the faith in its fullness, Meg; not just this part or that part as you feel inclined.”

“Hmmm,” said Meg. “I’ll have to think about that.” “But tell me, when did you get to be such a scripture scholar? You went right to that passage. I’m impressed.”

Joan just laughed. “I’m no scripture scholar. Last time I went to confession, I was having lots of problems with gossip and envy. Father told me to read that passage as my penance. Everybody needs to work on being pure of heart, even old aunties.

So, ... you didn’t really answer my question. You haven’t been to mass in awhile – do you want to come tonight?”